

THE METHOD OF INTRODUCING THE EUGENIC IDEAL
INTO SCHOOLS.

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THE aim of eugenics is the improvement of the racial qualities of future generations, and there is no nobler endeavour open to us. "Eugenics is the study of the agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations either physically or mentally." This quotation of Sir Francis Galton's familiar definition is sufficient answer to the ignorant or malicious suggestion that eugenics is altogether redolent of the stable and the barn-yard. It might, indeed, smack of worse, but as a matter of fact it takes to do with character and intelligence as much as with physique. Its chief thought is of racial quality, the hereditary "nature," but it is well aware that this cannot be expressed without the appropriate "nurture."

The extraordinarily difficult problem for discussion this afternoon is, how the eugenic ideal may be introduced into school education. So little has hitherto been attempted in this direction that it is doubtful whether we can wisely advance beyond giving hints for experiment and looking about for some general educational principles that have been shown to be sound in other cases, and that have some bearing on the present problem. It is to be hoped that some wisdom may result from the manifoldness of counsel which a conference of this kind should secure; it will be a great gain if we are able to discover any way of shortening the period of "trial and error."

I.

What is it then that we want? *Not* to coerce youth into the acceptance of a dogma, but to stir the imagination into hero-worship. *Not* to force something in from the outside, but to develop what is normally there already—a feeling of kinship, an awareness that we stand and fall together, a pride of race. *Not* to cloud the horizon with responsibilities prematurely anticipated, but to educate the conscience by the discharge of duties

which, though real and not fictitious, are yet appropriate to youth.

To talk about *teaching* a scholar racial responsibility is to betray a detachment from realities. What we want to discover is the appropriate sunshine and rain and fresh air for certain buds which lie ready to be awakened to growth. We want to find what physiologists call the liberating stimuli, and there are three whose efficacy is sure. First of all, there is—

(a) The artistic stimulus, through poem and picture, through song and story, through the history of our race and the lives of its heroes. As one of our wisest educationists has said: "The power that may be exercised in the formation of character by the presentment of ideal types is as yet very imperfectly utilised." It is ours with a thought-out strategy—of working towards a eugenic conscience—to learn the tactics of artistic appeal. For the young mind, each in its own secret and unconscious recapitulation, is hereditarily open to the thrill of the undying voices of the past. It may seem a strange route to the Eugenic ideal, but is it not the surest that we know?

"Let statue, picture, park, and hall,
Ballad, flag, and festival,
The past restore, the day adorn,
And make to-morrow a new morn.
So shall the drudge in dusty frock
Spy behind the city clock
Retinues of airy kings,
Skirts of angels, starry wings,
His fathers shining in bright fables,
His children fed at heavenly tables.
'Tis the privilege of Art
Thus to play its cheerful part."

(b) The second stimulus is in action. Whatever you do, Stanley Hall says somewhere, don't lecture. One does not require to read "Stalky and Co." to be sure of the futility of eugenic "jaws." For, as far as character is concerned, it is by living that we learn. And just as the play of animals is now recognised to be of vital importance as a rehearsal for the serious business of life, so there is much to be said for the proposition

that the most effective citizens are often those who learned early what it is to play the game. For that means the maximum self-expression tempered by loyalty, the greatest individual effort and yet subordination to the good of the whole, and besides that, the discipline of looking forward. The characteristics that may develop, and do develop into racial responsibility are in-the-making in playing the game. Another line of doing by which youth may learn is suggested by such activities as scouting, especially when this is developed on broad lines, with a good deal of exploring thrown in, and with real enduring of hardness. During the last bad railway strike, when there was distress in many parts of the country, the scouts of an academy near a mining district were employed to find out about sufferers in outlying cottages and to distribute provisions. It is difficult to conceive of anything more educative, as a change from the imperative and invaluable discipline of the schoolroom, than this active participation in the communal life. Are there not many indications that our education requires to become more occupational and less bookish, more motor and less sedentary, more communal and less conventual? In any case, it will have to be admitted that one of the reasons why painstaking education is often disappointing is that the responsibilities are mainly fictitious, not real. The apprentice in a carpenter's shop knows what real responsibility is when he makes a wheelbarrow that won't wheel, or spoils a good tool, but the school-boy "slacker" often gains no such valuable lesson. That he may be punished does not make him feel the responsibility any less fictitious. Our point is that a discipline in real responsibilities in youth is the natural condition of the desired development of the eugenic conscience.

(c) The third stimulus comes through the ordinary avenue of knowledge. But here again it is the indirect method that pays. Let a diagrammatic illustration suffice. It is very easy nowadays to get an observation bee-hive—even if you have to send to the Nicholson Institute at Stornoway to get the best one. A formicarium is also readily procurable. Now, it may be safely said that it is quite impossible for any normal pupil whatsoever—except a few who are born philosophers—not to be inter-

ested in the social life of the bees and the ants, especially if the teacher has added to an accurate knowledge of the facts just a dash of, say, Maeterlinck's art. But if this be true in regard to the study of insects, can we believe that the study of the human hive will prove less fascinating if we give it a fair chance? In spite of all our remarkable improvements, is it not too true still that we waste so much time over the Wars of the Roses that we seldom get near the beginning of the interpretation of the society in which we live? While there is truth in the epigram that activity is the only road to knowledge, it requires the supplement that accurate knowledge is the only sound basis for action in cases where you can't trust your instincts. It is useless nowadays to expect a feeling of responsibility for future generations from pathetically unreflective "Johnnies" and tragically mis-educated "Jennies," who do not understand, who have never had a chance of understanding, what racial evolution means.

Racial evolution in school! Surely! For the idea that the present is the child of the past and the parent of the future is one of those true and deep ideas which are also clear. It can be made real in a dozen ways, most convincingly from zoology and botany, from the bird show and the flower show for instance. But everywhere museums are springing up—following the Oxford Museum model—which are interpenetrated with the evolution idea, which show everything, from a word to a button-hole, as the long result of time.

It is to the naturalist's mind difficult to think of anything more useful in the education of the citizen than a well thought-out, vividly interesting yet not too easy, practical as well as didactic course of instruction, which should lead to a firm grasp of the general ideas of racial evolution and individual development, of the characteristic Darwinian idea of the web of life or the inter-relatedness of things at first sight far apart, and of the characteristic Pasteurian idea of the biological control of life. These ideas form a natural preparation for the eugenic ideal.

II.

Leaving the problem of the eugenic ideal, let us consider the question of definite *eugenic* instruction, including *sex-*

instruction in schools. This is another extremely difficult question, another problem whose solution must be found by experiment. An attempt to state some of the pro's and con's may be useful.

There is no doubt that many phenomena of modern life, especially in cities, are not eugenic, but kakogenic. Now, it is the opinion of many investigators who have paid special attention to the problems centred in sex, that instruction, or more definite instruction, would lessen "immorality," sexual vice, adolescence troubles, indecency, and pruriency. Ignoring the subject is said to be in part to blame for bad first impressions, discoloured views, morbid brooding, obsessions of fear, and some forms of sexual vice. All this handicaps eugenic progress.

For young children the best instruction is theoretically that given by the parents, especially by the mother. When this is given, it is well, especially if care is taken to avoid anticipating interest and to abstain from offering explanations which will be afterwards found to be untrue. We may tell a child to wait for an answer, but we must not give the child an untrue answer. Prof. Stanley Hall emphasizes the advantage of getting the right presentation first, pre-occupying the mind with a dignified wholesome view.

But we have to face the actual facts. Few parents give any sex-instruction at all. Few can do it well. Few, for instance, are able to utilise the indirect, impersonal, biological approach. Most parents are too shy. Moreover, the personal aspect of the case rises obtrusively in the boy's mind when his father speaks to him. In large sections of the community the boys and girls leave the home in early adolescence. The family is not the social unit it once was. And while we do not wish to acquiesce in this as a necessity, we have to admit it as a present fact. Furthermore, those children who most need guidance, because of inborn predisposition to go wrong, are the least likely to get help from their parents. It all comes to this, that in many cases, if not in most, information regarding the most important function in life is picked up haphazard, often in an inaccurate and discoloured form, often from sexually precocious or perverted

acquaintances. Is it not quite clear that instruction by parents requires to be supplemented?

It will probably be admitted by all that every college should have its voluntary course of instruction in bodily and mental hygiene, in the art of life, in genetics and eugenics, and that every college should have its wisely chosen confidential physician who would save the nation untold wastage, who would earn in the year the salary of his lifetime. In many cases, however, advice at college age comes late, not too late perhaps, but unfortunately late. Can nothing be done earlier?

Instruction in regard to the facts of sex has been tried in a considerable number of schools in America, Germany, Hungary, Switzerland, and Finland, and in a very few cases in Britain. It remains, however, in an experimental stage.

The instruction given deals with (1) the elementary physiology of sex and reproduction—how life is continued; (2) the significance and dangers of adolescence; (3) hygienic aids to self-control and clean-mindedness, the ideal of physical fitness, and the racial significance of sex.

The instruction is sometimes given quite by itself, to which most educationists object, and sometimes linked on to nature-study and biology, human physiology, domestic science, home-making studies, hygiene, economics, and social problems.

The instruction is given by the headmaster or headmistress, or by the class teacher, or by the teacher of biology, physiology, etc., or by the school physician, or by means of books and pamphlets. But there is great diversity of opinion in regard to the best method.

But we must not hurry on too quickly. There is a previous question, whether there should be in school any school-instruction whatsoever bearing on sex and reproduction. Many wise people think that there should be none, and for the following reasons:—

(a) It is pointed out that sex, which is the physical basis of one of the noblest and most personal expressions of the human spirit, is a very delicate matter. It is like religion. If you speak about it unwisely, you may do much more harm than good. To which it may be answered that if saying nothing were

working well, we should all wish to leave well alone. But it is not working well. Moreover, in proportion as we cease to educate on the cheap, we shall get teachers more able to undertake difficult tasks.

(b) It has been said that it is a terrible responsibility to break brutally on an adolescent's reserve of mind. But this is a question-begging objection. There is no occasion for psychic violence. There is no brutality in some good sound biology. There are many methods of indirect approach—some of the subtlest of which are beginning to be opened up by the suggestions of Freud. There is nothing brutal in Prof. Huxley's suggestion that there should be a carefully prepared chapter on the physiology of sex and reproduction inserted even in the school text books of physiology, which continue to be published on the grotesque assumption that man has no reproductive system.

(c) Doubt is also expressed whether the education authorities would be justified, even if willing, in attempting intrusion into what ought to be a parental responsibility. But the parents usually do nothing in the way of discharging this particular responsibility, and to get them to raise a revolution because the school was trying to do what they ought to do might be as wholesome as it would be hypocritical. A wiser answer is probably that the mode of sex-instruction chosen should be one that is not too far ahead of contemporary public sentiment.

It is easy to argue oneself into a *laissez-faire* policy until one comes back again face to face with the facts—of unwholesome ways of looking at things, of morbid curiosity, of bad habits, of filthy-mindedness, of thoughtless immorality, of disease, of habitual vice. These are ever dragging evolution in the mud, and the eugenic ideal of positive advance cannot hope to find wide realisation unless we try also to lessen the kakogenic handicaps.

It must be noted that unless we supply some wholesome instruction, the mind of the youth tends to be discoloured by unwholesome information gathered surreptitiously.

It must be noted that in every large school there is a small percentage of abnormal pupils, who infect others with their own unfortunate perversions.

If nothing "straight" is ever said by anyone, it is difficult to deny the justice of the sufferer's reproach—which is not confined to Brioux's plays—"But you never told me anything about that."

It should be noted, too, that the sex-instincts in man are general rather than sharply-defined. That is to say, we have, in regard to sex-functions, very little instinctive knowledge of what various phenomena mean, or of what is normal, or of what is to be carefully avoided. A boy or a girl may slide into bad habits without being well aware of what is happening.

These are a few of the considerations which lead some who have given careful attention to the subject to think that there should be *some* sex-instruction in schools. And in working towards something practicable, it may be of service to point out that the instruction will need to be varied with reference to different sections of the community, and with reference to the differences between girls and boys.

Taking the first point, one does not, of course, imagine that the dangers and difficulties involved in sex are restricted to particular sections of the community. They are universal—we are all tarred with the same brush—but they alter with altered circumstances—from the one-roomed house to the unnatural segregation of the public school. The counsels given by the wise headmaster or the wise school physician would be very different in different cases. It must be remembered, too, that habits are formed in the concrete, by habitually doing or not doing something, and that if the outside school conditions have tended to the establishment of a vicious habit of word, or thought, or deed, there is not much hopefulness in the school discipline saying don't. Which leads one to make the obvious remark that the problems of sexual vice and the like cannot be dealt with, either theoretically or practically, by themselves. They are wrapped up with problems of housing, occupation, wages, interests, use of leisure hours, education, civics, and what not. Everyone knows the importance of the economic and occupational factor in keeping up the traffic in immorality.

What seems the practicable line of advance is to recognise a graduated series of educational methods, leaving it to the

discretion of the teacher to decide how far along the series it may be profitable to go.

(a) Much may be done in the nurture of adolescence by developing external pre-occupations and interests and real responsibilities; by opening paths of legitimate excitement (in work and play for both boys and girls, in art and wholesome adventure, in dramatic and musical exercise); and by disciplines in enduring hardness (*e.g.*, in scouting, boys' brigades, in girls' guildries, in climbing and swimming and exploring).

(b) The highest value is to be attached to all forms of education (religious, ethical, and imaginative) which fill the mind with noble examples, which exalt the conception of human love by associating it with the chivalrous, the poetic, and the romantic, and which sets a premium on self-control, courtesy, mutual respect, and healthy-mindedness.

(c) While respecting the natural instinct of reserve in regard to sex questions, something might be done to suggest that the mystery is observed because sex is sacred, not because it is inherently shameful or unclean. From history and literature it is surely possible to suggest that control and chastity make marriages happy and nations strong, while the *corruptio optimi pessima* is already hell.

(d) Much may be done through Nature Study (for younger pupils) and Biological Studies (for senior pupils) to remove the facts of sex and reproduction from a purely human and personal setting, to exhibit them as natural phenomena at many different grades of evolution, to put an end to pruriency, and to make the big facts about the continuance of life familiar in the botanical and zoological fields—leaving it to ordinary intelligence to see the human applications.

(e) Beyond that it may be possible to go—in the way of more definite sex instruction in the senior classes in schools—for boys in particular. It is probable that the instruction will be most successful when it is linked on to, and arises naturally out of studies in natural history, biology, physiology, domestic science, hygiene, social problems, and the like.

It seems quite plain that girls require much gentler sex-education than boys, and the difficulty cannot be ignored that,

as things are at present, a large proportion of the girls will not marry. It may be distinctly dangerous to bring to the focus of consciousness instincts which often remain normally at a sub-conscious level.

It seems also quite plain that when sex-instruction is given—whether by the headmaster, the science teacher, the school physician, or by lending booklets—caution must be exercised not to anticipate interest, not to excite, not to deal with the pathological, not to frighten, not to pretend that men and women are angels, and not to say too much!

III.

Too much prominence in this contribution to the discussion may have been given to the problem of sex-instruction, but that has been done deliberately in the conviction that the lack of sex-instruction is one of the great barriers to eugenic progress.

To return for a moment to the main theme of introducing the eugenic ideal in school education, three definite suggestions have been made. We may summon to our aid the witchery of art; we may begin an apprenticeship in services which make towards racial improvement; and we may appeal to the intelligence by making evolution, variation, heredity, selection, the web of life, the biological control of life—real conceptions, and leaving them like seeds to grow in the mind.

But is there not something more needed to win any great measure of success? Is it not significant that Sir Francis Galton, who so clearly recognised that eugenics must pass from science into practice, was also so strongly convinced that great progress would not come until the eugenic ideal came to have a religious value in many minds. When it begins to sway us through and through—this vision of a nation healthy alike in mind and body; when we come to care more about that than about anything else, then we shall make short work with our difficulties and our timidities, our objections and our sloth. We shall know eugenics to be “a virile creed, full of hopefulness, and appealing to many of the noblest feelings of our nature.” And, *having made sure of sound eugenic precepts*, we shall hearken to what was said to the ancient people of high eugenic practice and ideal—“and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up, and thou shalt find them for a

sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes; and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house and upon thy gates."

DISCUSSION.

REV. CECIL GRANT wished to assert that there was one practicable reform for which cumulative evidence of such strength was already available, that it was the immediate duty of the Eugenics Education Society to take adequate measures to investigate that evidence. He could himself pile up such evidence from very numerous sources, including an appeal to the strong statements made in the morning sitting by Mr. Badley, after many years' experience, and he could appeal to the known opinions of several of the most eminent of the members of the Eugenics Society. But instead, he would rest his case boldly on his own experience. It was an experience of fifteen years of bringing up together boys and girls, of ages ranging from 2 to 20. Those years of close observation and investigation left him as certain that the mixture of sexes and ages was a prophylactic against carnal temptation, as he was certain that vaccination was a prophylactic against smallpox. He would say that co-education, of almost any kind, under conscientious management, would diminish by one-half the number of those who failed to go through life pure. That bringing up together, under proper conditions, boys and girls would stamp out unchastity, save in rare cases of abnormality. He would submit three considerations no less relevant to this conference: (1) that such co-education made for better marriages and better choice, as it was based upon better and deeper knowledge. (2) That the co-education of boys and girls resulted in a more equable development on all sides, and there was more certainty of discovering in what direction lay their special inheritance and strength, and how that might best be employed in the service of humanity. (3) That in a co-educative school, direct hygienic teaching could be given with perfect security. Of course, it should be given wisely, but it could be imparted with tact, and, after some experience, with perfect security. Finally, he submitted that co-education was confronted at the present by a danger which was grave and wholly undeserved, and into which he had not now time to enter. The sole hope of co-education having a fair trial in our day and generation seemed to rest with the active and undelayed help afforded by the Eugenics Education Society. He felt the full responsibility of what he was saying, but was not just a personal statement of that kind, deliberately made, standing by itself, sufficient to justify, nay even to compel such a society to take immediate steps to investigate this matter? That was his challenge. If he were in order in doing so, he would move that a committee be formed for that purpose. He would take the earliest opportunity of doing so, for he was convinced that co-education was, after religion, the most powerful agency under social control in the direction of improving the racial qualities in the future, physically, mentally, and morally.

COLONEL DE BURGH (Boy Scouts) said that the organisation which he represented was heart and soul with the aims of the Eugenic Educa-